

# WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE

*Bringing in the Youth and Community Voice for  
Sustainable School Improvement*

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# Frazer Head Start



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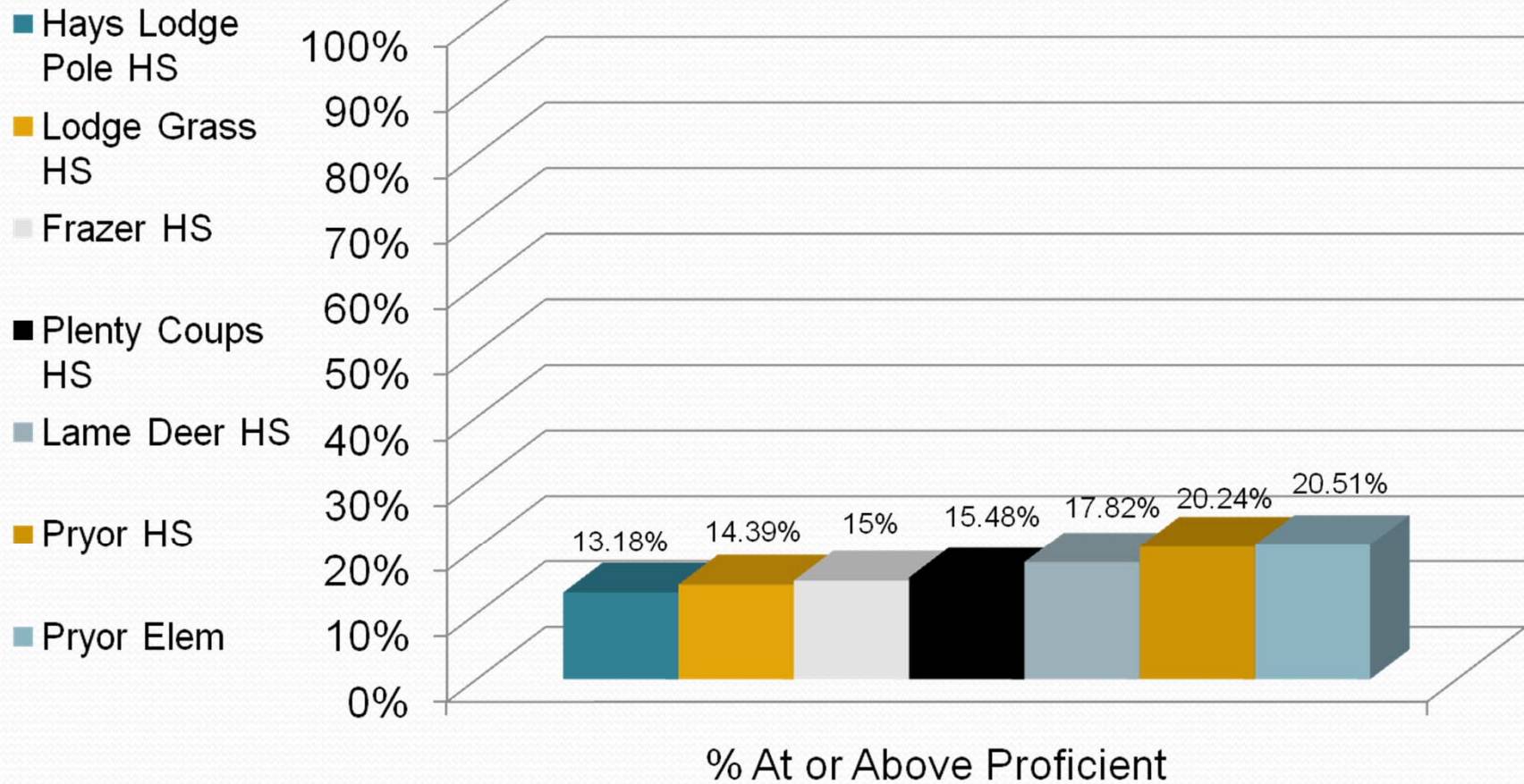


# The Montana Journey

- Superintendent Denise Juneau established “Schools of Promise” in Summer 2009
  - Early analysis that without community, tribal and family support, the impetus to change would not be there
- “Schools & Communities Coming Together for Education” statewide tour in Fall 2009
  - Connecting around shared values
  - Intentional structure of community gatherings
- Dec. 2009 notification from US Department of Education on new SIG guidelines
  - An opportunity to put theory into practice



# School Improvement Grant Schools





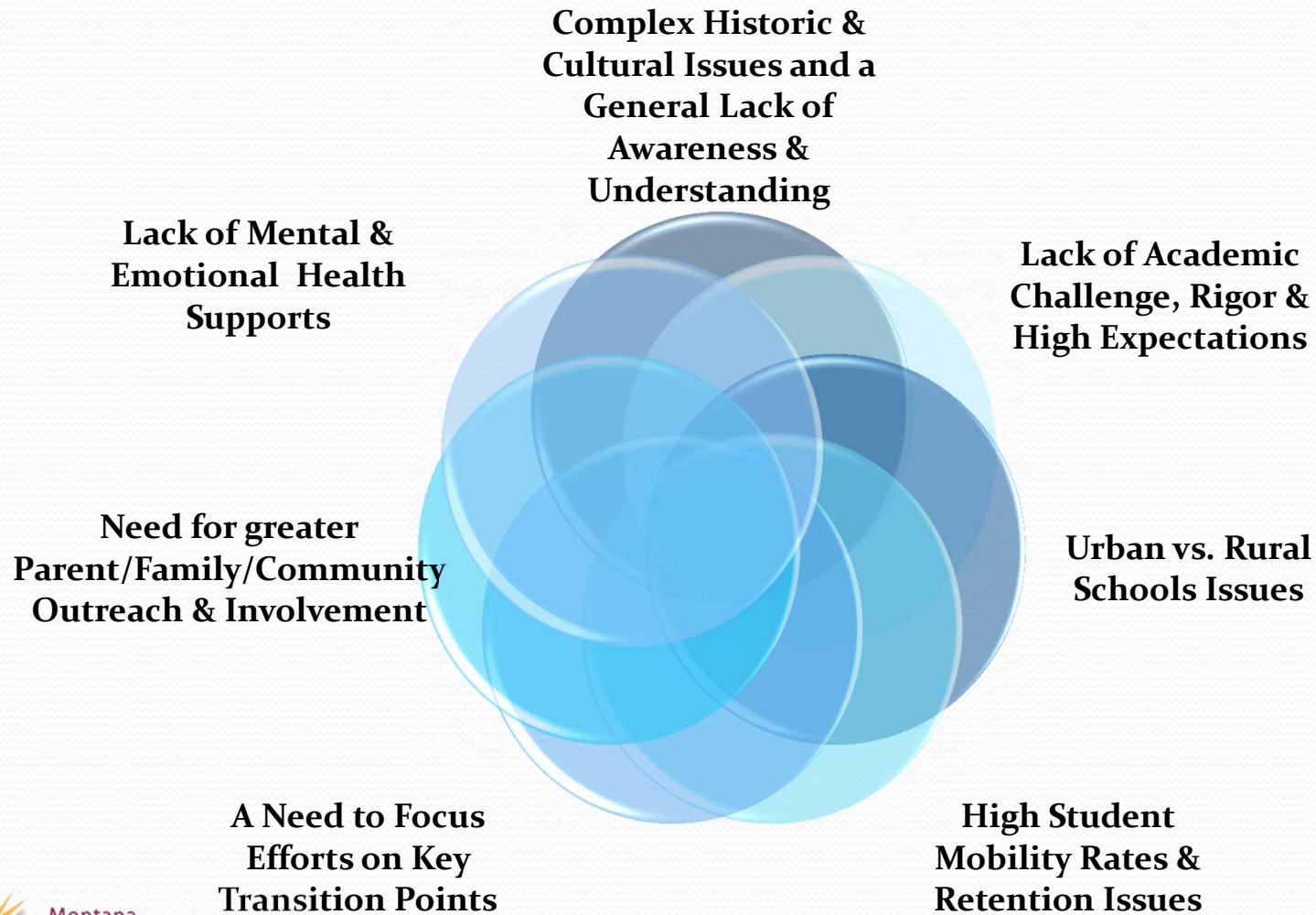
# Crow Students



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# Issues & Factors to Consider



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# Take Away # 1: Words Matter

*How you talk about what you do,  
how you feel, what you think or  
what you hope to accomplish  
**matters***



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# A Unique Opportunity

- The reality: achievement gaps, educational disparities and sense of urgency for our American Indian youth
- We are at an unique crossroads that we cannot afford to let slip through our fingers
- Federal support and national focus aligning with state
- State Superintendent Denise Juneau's commitment and leadership – “we cannot allow another generation to fail”
- Unprecedented collaboration with OPI, school districts & across state agencies (DPHHS, Labor) and other entities (Tribes, IHS)
- Leadership & momentum from school board trustees, educators, parents, and community members -- the time to act is now!



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# Our Challenges...

## *How we talk about our work*

- We know our communities have survived tough challenges that few other Montanans have faced
- Everyone suffers in a school system that doesn't work for the kids or the adults
- Our resiliency & strength keeps us going

# An Unprecedented Collaboration

- Nothing like this has ever been done in Montana before
- This isn't a typical grant where we get money and cross our fingers and hope that it works
- We're building a collaboration to bring in state-of-the-art / research based practices & programs, resources, and expertise so our kids get the education they deserve
- Take in to consideration our unique population and their specific needs





# Superintendent Denise Juneau



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# Question:

How have you used SIG to bring a more robust family & community voice into your school improvement efforts?

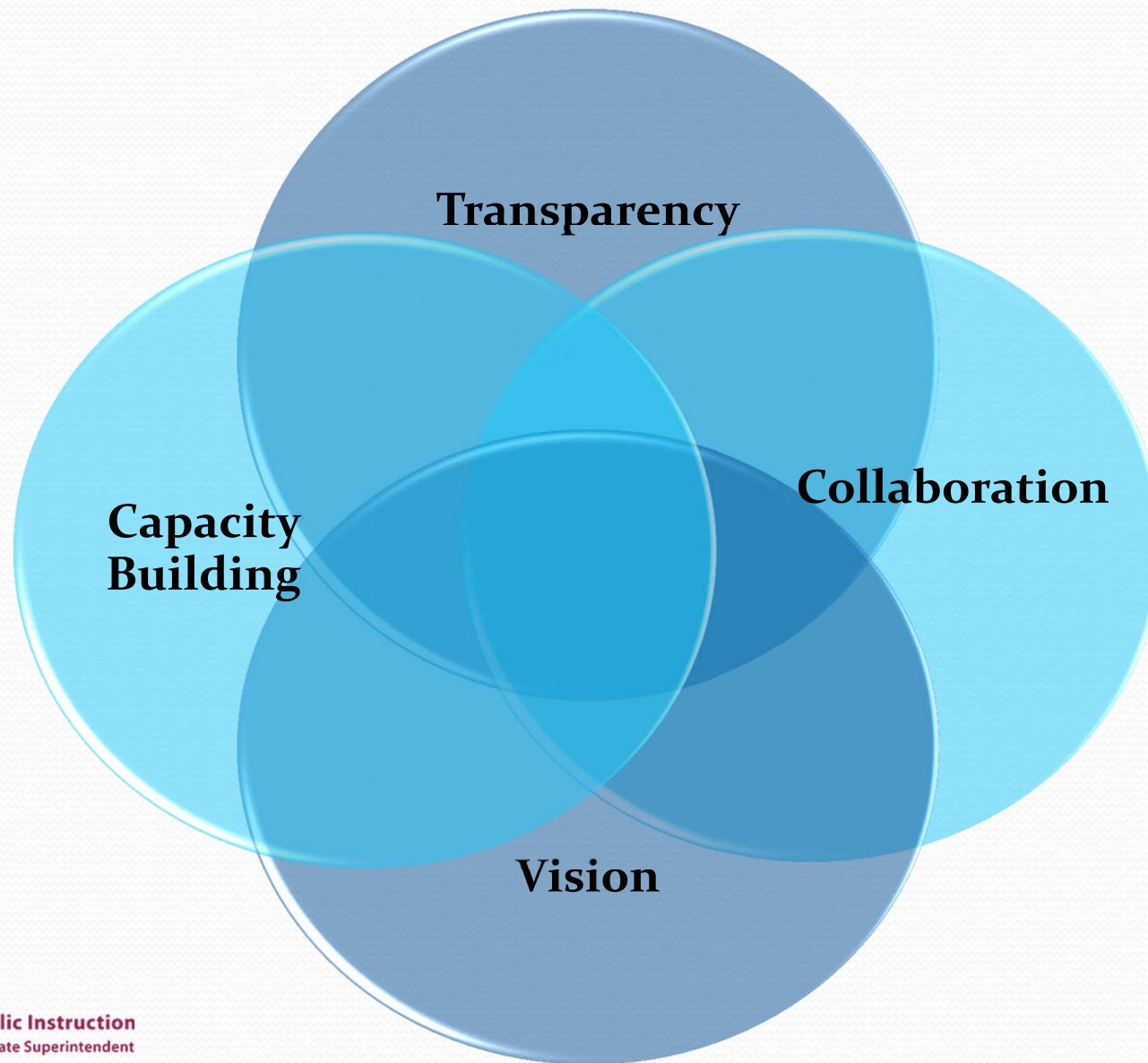


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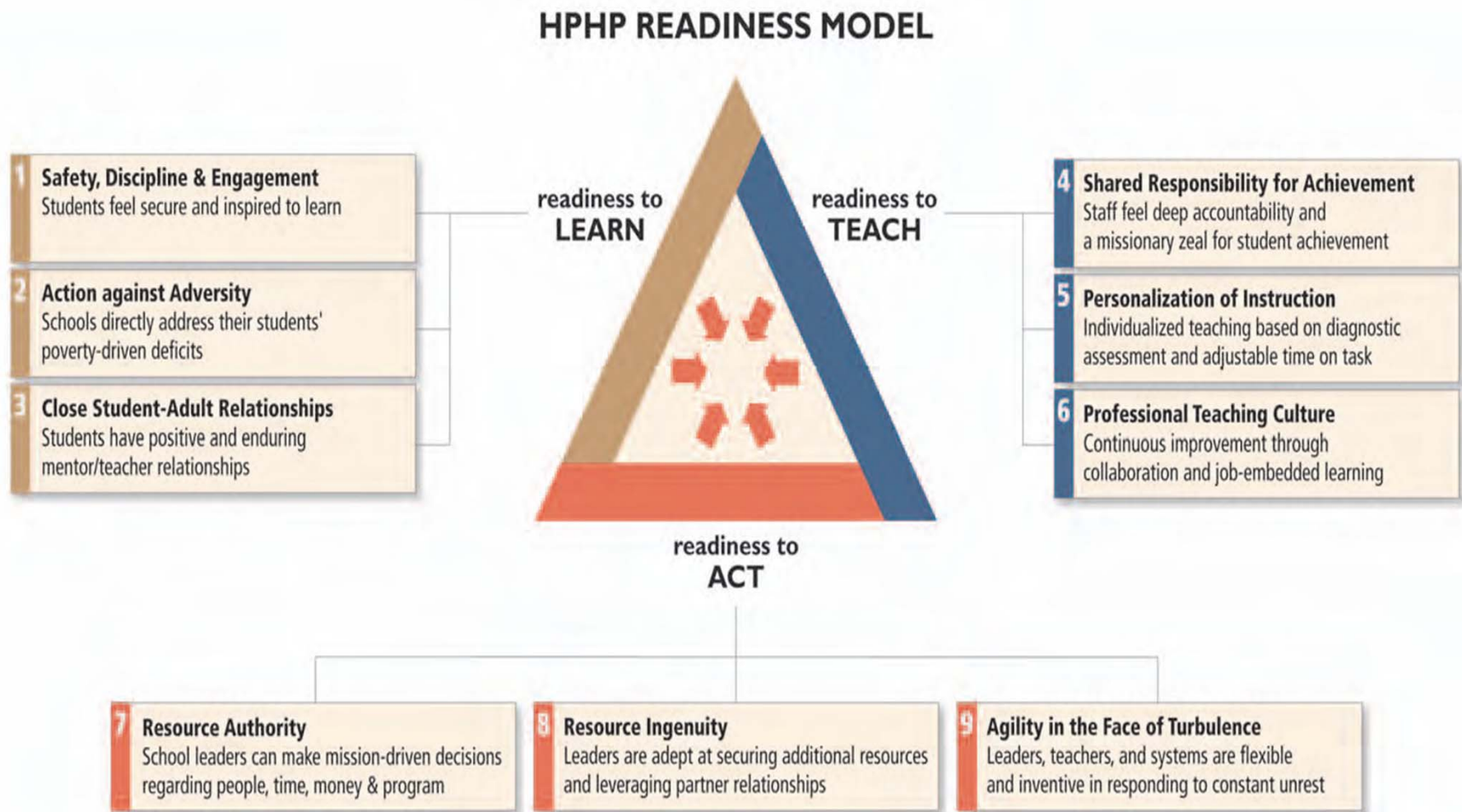
# Montana's CORE SIG School VALUES



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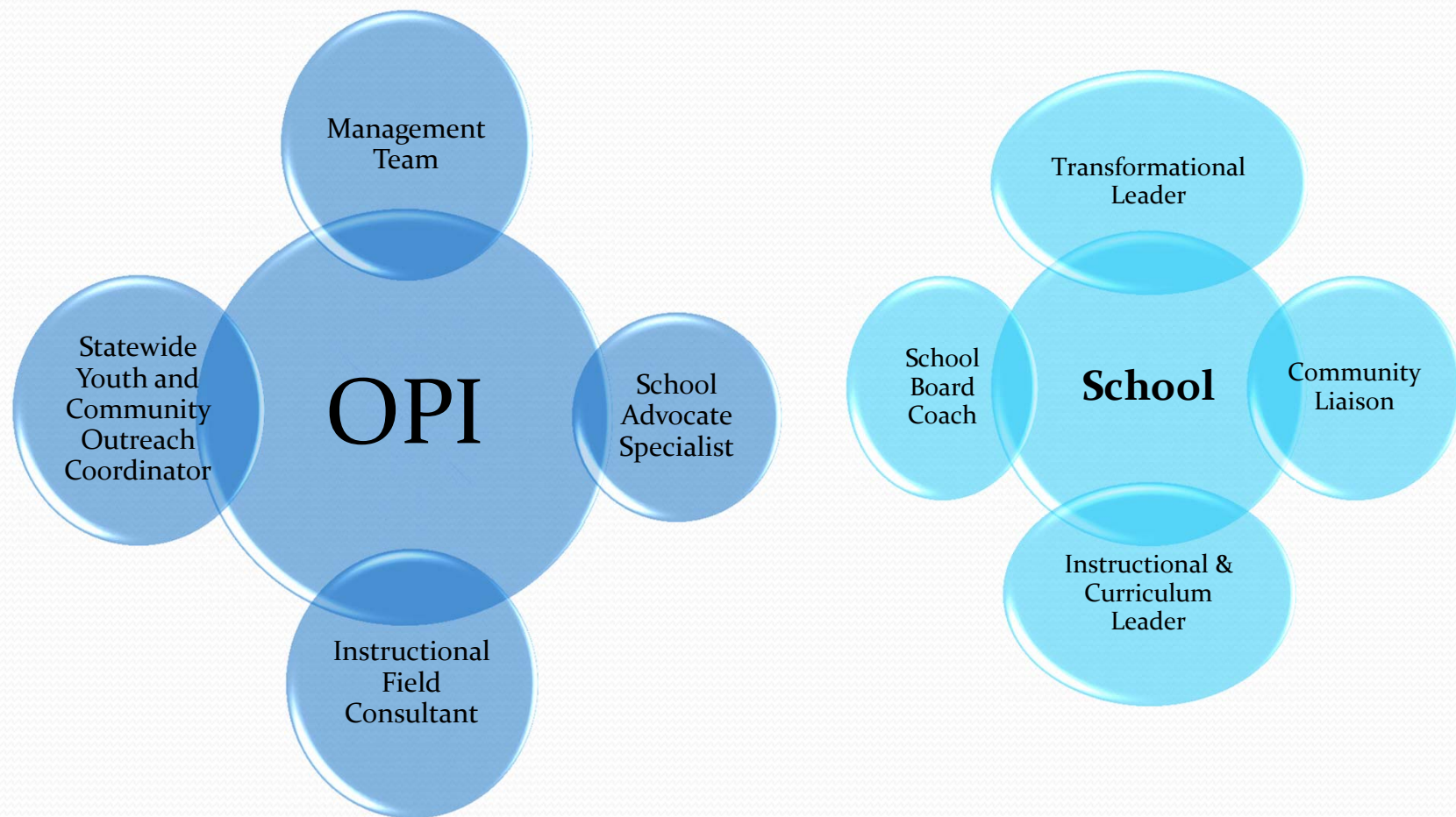
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# High Performing-High Poverty Schools Readiness Model from MASS Insight Education





# OPI SIG Staffing Structure



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# OUR CL TEAM!



Savannah Siquah – Pryor, Robert Simpson – Lame Deer,  
James DeHerrera – Frazer, Forest Horn – Lodge Grass



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# Getting the right people on the bus

- Finding the right person is key = trust with community
- Identify the existing state strengths and build the structure to play to the individual and organizational capacities
- Step outside education realm for your talent



# Statewide Youth & Community Outreach Coordinator

## *Overview of the position description:*

- I. This position is responsible for providing professional consultation and program assistance to assess, improve, and support youth, school and community collaborations;
- II. for providing coordination to implement, improve, and integrate community and youth engagement with school improvement efforts;
- III. for providing training and in-service programs;
- IV. and for coordination and participation in collaborative efforts to involve youth and community in this initiative.





# Role of Community Liaison

- ***Overview of the position description:*** OPI, in partnership with the local school districts, seeks to:
  - I. engage a community liaison to work onsite 30 hours a week to strengthen the youth and community collaborations and the parental support with the school.
  - II. work hand-in-hand with students and community to implement programs identified by the SIG for improving the overall welfare of the students
  - III. and work to strengthen and support the foundations of effective community support through the readiness model adopted by the SIG.

\* Help build inclusive, culturally responsive schools



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# How we would describe the work of the CL's

- Networkers
- Listeners
- Builders
- Partners
- Collaborators





# Community Liaison Orientation

## (Take Away #2, #3 and #4)

- People support what they help to create
  - Your job is to help them co-create through skillful facilitation, listening & optimism that change is possible
  - Ask, “What has worked before? Tell me about a time when the community came together and solved a challenge?”
- Meaningful, lasting change happens at the local level
  - Help to establish vision
  - Help to clear the way for real productive, new ground
  - Help to create the incentives for lasting, inspiring change
- “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead
  - Develop a list of 10 key people and do 1:1s
  - Remember – particularly in rural areas – people wear many hats
  - Remember – particularly in rural areas – people are interrelated
  - These can be powerful tools to network



# Technical/functional pieces

- Weekly calls, participate DLT teams, onsite team, etc
- Weekly reports
- Team development and sharing of lessons learned
- Documentation of everything we are doing
  - To disseminate and replicate in other schools



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# Wyola Community Meeting



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# Protocols

- *Attending Meetings:*  
SIG teams need to conduct regular formal meetings. This will keep everyone informed and also provide documentation about the work that is being done and the progress that is being made. CLs must attend all district and OPI meetings.
- *Phones and Computers:*  
Phones/computers issued by OPI should only be used during working hours. There is an understanding that due to the nature of the work CLs perform, working hours are extensive and do not always mean 8AM to 5PM. Also, you should not use the phones/computers for personal reasons.
- *Weekly Work Plans:*  
Generally, it is a good idea to share your work plans for the week with your teammates. When anticipating a day or week in which you will be working extended hours, be sure to email the SIG Unit Director.
- *Events Planning:*  
Following the theme of communication let your teammates from both your SIG and district teams know when you are planning an event.
- *School Board Relations:*  
Notify the School Board Coach on all matters having to do with the school board. As for attending meetings, you can go as a community member but not as a representative of SIG or OPI. If called on at the meeting to comment or answer questions, let them know that you are there as a community member only and not to speak on behalf of SIG or OPI.
- *Tribal Relations:*  
In all matters involving the tribe, it is best to think of yourself as part of one official entity relating to another official entity. As an OPI employee, you are always representing OPI. Therefore, interface with the Tribal Education Department. This is the tribe's representative in all matters dealing with education. It is your job to build a strong relationship with the Tribal Education Department.
- *Student Travel:*  
Use the parent permission procedure and forms the schools have already. It is important to have parental permission whenever you are taking students on a trip. CL's cannot serve in the capacity of chaperones.





# Major work projects to date

- Trust and relationship development with youth and community
- Relationships with Tribal Councils and their programs
- Building local support for other programs & activities (GEAR UP, PTA)
- Parent Teacher Home Visiting Project
- Identify community resources
  - Existing Programs
  - Parent Groups
- Student Incentives
  - Lounge
  - CRT Testing
  - School stores
- Mini grants, Afterschool programs and clubs
  - Rodeo
  - Drama
  - Life skills
  - Greenhouse
  - Tutoring
  - Film Club



# What we've learned

- Developing trust and following through on what we say is important with youth & their families
  - **Students often feel unheard**
  - Baby steps – be thoughtful and deliberate, learn from mistakes, keep moving forward
  - They need to be involved and participating the whole time
- Parents want to get involved
- Understanding the culture of the reservations is critical to success
- Resiliency is an amazing thing and something our youth, staff and communities have lots of!
- Communication is KEY
- You get more bees with honey...





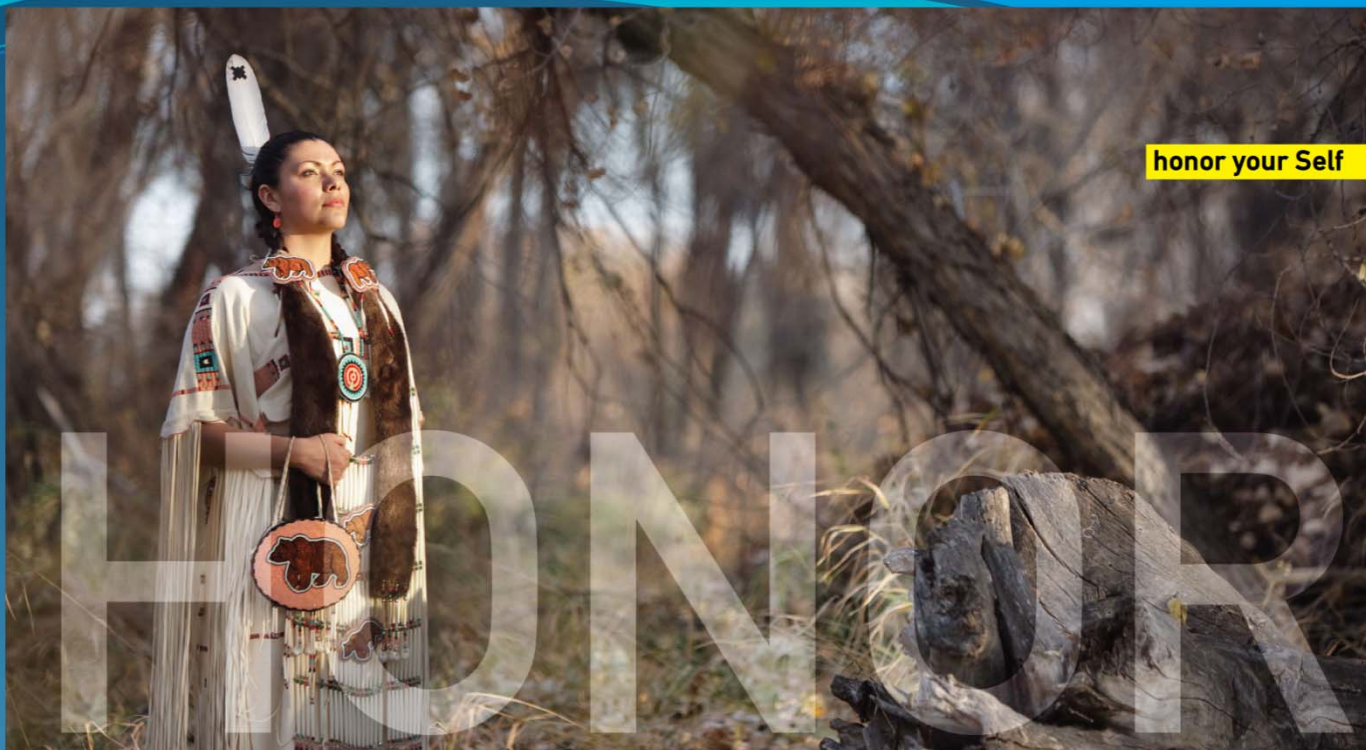
# Question:

Communicating to families and community the immense changes of SIG is challenging. What are some ways you have effectively communicated about SIG to the community?



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honor your Self

**"DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP. I TRULY BELIEVE ONE PERSON – A TEACHER, A MENTOR, A FRIEND – CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE."**

Desi Small-Rodriguez, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe who grew up in Larne Deer, comes from a family that believes strongly in education. "I was raised with the notion," she says, "that the way you help your people and the way that you advance and make something of yourself is through education, even if you have to struggle." So when Desi heard about College Horizons, a non-profit organization that helps Native students learn how to get into college, she jumped at the chance. Thanks to this experience, Desi went on to Stanford, where she received her Bachelor's degree and then a Master's degree in Sociology.

Life at Stanford wasn't easy for Desi at first. "It was a huge culture shock," she says. "But eventually I realized," she says, "that if I worked hard, I could master anything that I pursued." A lot of her strength, Desi admits, comes from appreciating the struggles that came before her. "Knowing that the history of my people, the Cheyenne, is very much a reality today is important," she says. "Even though it might have happened 100 years ago, it's still very much current. The history of struggle, of fighting, of being relocated to Oklahoma, walking back in the bitter cold and finally getting the reservation established and being able to live on our homeland. All of this is not history as much as it is our life as Cheyenne people. I take great pride in the struggles my ancestors had to endure for me to be where I am."

Desi, who is now working in New Zealand on an inaugural tribal research project for the Tainui Maori tribe, plans to continue her work in Indigenous education and policy. "There are a lot of harsh realities and difficult choices that young people face growing up on reservations and in urban communities," says Desi. "Believing that you're capable of overcoming the hardships is crucial. Our education system isn't perfect, but it's our best chance for providing our children with a bright future and empowering our communities."

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN TOLD BY MY PARENTS THAT THERE ARE GOOD ROLE MODELS AND THERE ARE BAD MODELS... YOU MAKE THAT DECISION FOR YOURSELF. YOU CHOOSE WHICH KIND OF ROLE MODEL YOU WANT TO BE."



Desi Small-Rodriguez '22  
Northern Cheyenne  
St. Labre Indian School  
Stanford University  
Social Science Researcher



For more information about the poster series go to:  
[opi.mt.gov/Indian&AmericanPosters](http://opi.mt.gov/Indian&AmericanPosters)



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